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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - MIDEAST - LEBANON, GAZA INCURSIONS

11. All TV stations reported on the crisis in the Middle East.

12. On July 18, private TV channel "Chilevision" international pundit Raul Sohr commented: "Hezbollah is demonstrating that it still has a large capability to attack Israel.... Therefore the strategic position in the region has radically changed. It is very clear that Hezbollah has prepared this campaign and that it has efficiently hidden its rocket launching-ramps. Israel has been unsuccessful in finding the militias and the fact is that it is fighting a ghost war..."

13. On July 18, private TV channel "Mega" international analyst Libardo Buitrago said: "Adding to missile attacks and increasing fears of the civilian population are the strong statements made by the largest global powers, the United States and Great Britain. George W. Bush and Tony Blair directly accused Iran and Syria of supporting the Hezbollah guerrillas, thus increasing the risk that the conflict may expand into a regional war..."

14. On July 18, conservative, afternoon daily "La Segunda" (circ 31,834) carried an editorial entitled "War in Lebanon." Quote:

"As President Bush crudely told his ally Tony Blair, the United States wants Syria to force the Hezbollah to cease its attacks. Meanwhile...the Security Council has decided to discuss a UN intervention. But this process is slow and the threat of actions from other unpredictable actors such as Iran increases."

15. On July 19, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (circ. 116,807) carried an editorial entitled "Escalation in the Middle East." Quote:

"These are not isolated incidents between militias and Israeli soldiers. The heightening of the attacks with missiles in northern Israel has been answered with bombings over vast regions and cities.... Thus far diplomatic efforts have had no effect among those fighting and there is fear that the conflict will escalate and become regional... In this situation the involvement of United Nations is necessary. But the organization cannot do anything without the will of its members.... While the European Union claims 'disproportionate violence' on the part of Israel in its response to Hezbollah attacks...the U.S. refuses to condemn the Israeli attacks and has explicitly given its support to Yehud Olmer. The White House believes the current crisis was encouraged by Syria, which wants to return to Lebanon after years of occupation, and by Iran, which is trying to blow smoke on the global controversy over its uranium enrichment program.... We don't foresee a quick solution to the crisis; diplomatic timing rarely coincides with the needs of the civilian population and many times political interests outweigh humanitarian ones."

YAMAUCHI